The IAU South-West and Central Asian Regional Office of Astronomy for Development (SWCA ROAD)

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Abstract

During the International Year of Astronomy (IYA) in 2009, the International Astronomical Union (IAU) announced its Strategic Plan on Astronomy for Development (for 2011-2020, followed by an extension to 2021-2030). One of its main components was the creation of an Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD) and corresponding Regional Offices (ROADs) for implementation and coordination of its aims. The OAD was established in Cape Town, South Africa and later on 10 ROADs and 1 Language Center (LOAD) were created. Since 2015, Armenia hosts one of them, the South West and Central Asian (SWCA) ROAD. At present, 6 countries have officially joined (Armenia, Georgia, Iran, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Turkey), but the Office serves for a rather broad region, from Eastern Europe to Central Asia. Armenia's geographical location and its historical role in astronomy (both for well-known archaeoastronomical heritage and the presence of the famous Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO), founded by Viktor Ambartsumian in 1946) serve as a link between Europe, Eastern Partnership countries, the Middle East, and Asia in general. We run activities in 3 directions, Task Forces (TF): TF1 *Universities and Research*, TF2 *Children and Schools* , and TF3 *Public Outreach*. In addition, we participate in the OAD Flagship Projects; Flagship 1: *Astrotourism*, Flagship 2: *Astro for Mental Health*, Flagship 3: *Hack4Dev*. We present our projects and all other accomplishments and discuss the role of our ROAD in maintaining contacts and the development of Astronomy in the region, as well as contacts between Europe and the Eastern Partnership countries. Most up-to-date information about the IAU SWCA ROAD is available on its webpage at http://iau-swa-road.aras.am/eng.

Keywords: *IAU – OAD – ROAD – astronomical research – astronomical education – public outreach – astronomy for development – European Eastern Partnership*

1. Introduction

The International Astronomical Union (IAU) developed and adopted in 2009 a decadal Strategic Plan (SP) now named *"Astronomy for Development"* (IAU, 2009[1]). The SP significantly increases the role of astronomy for other sciences, technology, culture and society, as it is tightly linked to all of these (Figure 1). This plan has been resulted from an extensive process of consultation beginning with a meeting of stakeholders in Paris in January 2008 and including feedback from key stakeholders during the various drafts of the SP. It was endorsed by the General Assembly of the IAU in Rio de Janeiro in August 2009, and builds on the momentum of the very successful International Year of Astronomy 2009 (IYA). The objective of this SP is to use Astronomy to stimulate development in all regions of the world. Crucial to the implementation of the SP was the creation of a global *"Office of Astronomy for Development"* (OAD). The OAD is tasked with establishing and strategically coordinating Regional Offices (ROADs, Table 1) and Language Expertise Centres (LOADs) across the world, as well as three Task Forces, namely:

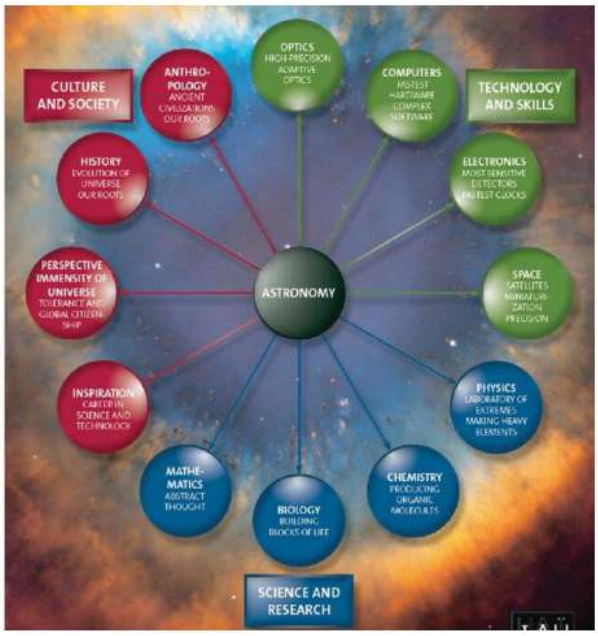
- **TF1**: *Astronomy for Universities & Research* (Professional Astronomy; scientific networks, including developing professional astronomy in all regional countries; stimulating interdisciplinary research)
- **TF2**: *Astronomy for Children & Schools* (Astronomical Education at all levels: children (UNAWE, etc.), pupils, students, etc.; working tightly with the **IAU OAE** and IAU OYA; collaborating with teachers, educators, etc.)

[1] https://iau.org/static/education/strategicplan_2010-2020.pdf

- **TF3**: *Astronomy for the Public* (Public Outreach, Communicating Astronomy with the Public (CAP), Amateur Astronomy, Astronomical Heritage, Archaeoastronomy & Astronomy in Culture (AAC), etc.; working tightly with the **IAU OAO**; collaborating with communicators, amateurs, journalists)

Table 1: The IAU Office of Astronomy for Development (OAD), Regional Offices of Astronomy for Development (ROADs) and Language Centers (LOAD).

Office	Abbreviation	Hosted in	Established
World Office	**OAD**	**South Africa**	**2011**
North America	NA ROAD	USA	2020
Andean Region	Andean ROAD	Argentina	2015
Europe	E-ROAD	Netherlands	2018
South West and Central Asia	SWCA ROAD	Armenia	2015
Arab World and Arabic Language	Arab World ROAD	Jordan	2015
East Asia and Chinese Language	EA ROAD	China	2012
South East Asia	SEA ROAD	Thailand	2012
West Africa	WA ROAD	Nigeria	2015
East Africa	EA ROAD	Ethiopia	2014
Southern Africa	SA ROAD	Zambia	2014
Portuguese Language	PLOAD	Portugal	2015



Astrophysics
Astrochemistry
Astrobiology
Astromedicine
Astrogeology (Planetology)
Space research
SETI / CETI
Instrumentation
Astroinformatics
Astrostatistics
VO / e-Science
Archaeoastronomy
Astronomy in Culture
Amateur Astronomy
Astronomical Education
Astro Tourism
Scientific (Astro) Journalism
Astronomy Outreach

Figure 1. The relation of Astronomy with other sciences, technology, culture and society. A number of inter- and multi-disciplinary sciences and other fields are listed having tight relation to astronomy.

In addition, there are 3 Flagship Projects:

- **Flagship 1**: *Astrotourism* (an intersection of Astronomy and Tourism; it is a niche travel industry that focuses on celestial events, dark sky destinations, and space-related activities)
- **Flagship 2**: *Astronomy for Mental Health* (focused on harnessing the inspirational potential of Astronomy, and using it as a tool for improving people's mental health and wellbeing)

- **Flagship 3**: *Hackathons for Development* (using Hackathons to accelerate global development and insights)

Through a strong partnership with the South African government, the OAD is hosted at the South African Astronomical Observatory (www.astro4dev.org), a facility of the National Research Foundation. Furthermore, 8 regional offices were created, one of which is in Armenia.

2. The Establishment of the IAU SWA ROAD

Armenia showed interest and activities in the establishment of one of the regional IAU offices since the beginning of the initiative (2009-2011). Armenia's proposal to host a ROAD was rather strong both from the point of view of the available facilities and ongoing activities. The proposal was finally approved on 10 June, 2015 and an agreement was signed between the IAU and the Byurakan Astrophysical Observatory (BAO) on 6 August 2015. The office was formally established on 1 September 2015 and was called **IAU South West Asian (SWA) ROAD**. *Dr.* Areg Mickaelian became its Director. The SWA Regional Steering Committee was created in September 2015, as well as SWA webpage was opened also in September 2015 (http://iau-swa-road.aras.am, Figure 2). The staff members joined on 1 October 2015. Finally, the Inauguration Ceremony was held on 13 October 2015. The IAU OAD / SWA ROAD Workshop was also attached to this event. Representatives from the IAU (General Secretary Piero Benvenuti, former Vice-President George Miley, OAD Director Kevin Govender) and representatives of regional and some other countries (Georgia, Iran, Turkey,Russia, Israel, Jordan) were present.

Like our long tradition to organize joint Armenian-Georgian (Byurakan-Abastumani) workshops (colloquia) since 1974, we conducted a new series of Armenian-Iranian Astronomical Workshops (AIAW). The first one was organized from 13 to 16 October 2015 in Byurakan, so that all Iranian guests were able to participate in the IAU SWA ROAD Inauguration Ceremony.

Georgia and Iran were the first countries, along with Armenia, to officially join the SWA ROAD. During many years and centuries, these countries have had numerous relations in all areas, including science and Astronomy.



Figure 2. IAU South West and Central Asian ROAD webpage and logo showing also the geographical location of the SWCA region and 6 countries.

Since the beginning, IAU SWA ROAD developed activities in all three Task Forces. A number of meetings and schools were organized and a number of other projects were accomplished. Especially, successful were the activities related to Scientific Tourism (and later more specific Astronomical Tourism or Astro Tourism) in Armenia and in the region. We were awarded two grants in 2016: OAD grant for the development of Astro Tourism in the South West Asia and Swiss SDC grant for the development of Scientific Tourism in Armenia.

SWCA ROAD representatives, Director Areg Mickaelian and BAO Director Haik Harutyunian, took part in the **IAU Arab World ROAD opening** in December 2015. In February-March 2016, Areg Mickaelian and Sona Farmanyan took part in the **OAD/ROADs meeting in Cape Town, South Africa**. The whole SWA team (Areg Mickaelian, Susanna Hakopian, the new TF1 coordinator, Sona Farmanyan, and

Gor Mikayelyan) visited Georgia in March-April 2016 to strengthen collaboration and exchange scientific knowledge. In August 2016, Areg Mickaelian and Sona Farmanyan were invited to RIAAM, Maragheh, Iran, to participate in a workshop and give talks. In 2020, Areg Mickaelian and Gor Mikayelyan participated in the next **OAD/ROADs meeting in Cape Town, South Africa**.

We hold regular telecons both with OAD/ROAD and with the SWA ROAD Steering Committee to give short reports on the accomplished affairs and to discuss all current and future matters.

3. Expansion to IAU SWCA ROAD

In May 2016, Areg Mickaelian and the Scientific Secretary of BAO Elena Nikoghosyan visited three Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to recover our former contacts and collaboration. As a result, during June 2016, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan with official letters also joined our ROAD. This significantly strengthens our centre and expands its sphere of activities to Central Asia.

Due to the involvement of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, our regional centre was renamed to **IAU South West and Central Asian (SWCA) ROAD**. Corresponding changes and additions were made on our webpage.

On November 17, 2017, **Turkey** officially joined the South West and Central Asian ROAD office and expressed its desire to carry out its activities for the development of Astronomy by adopting Armenia's coordinating role. It is important to state that we also made a political big step. Armenia recognized as an astronomical centre by Turkey. Although it was setup by the IAU, however at present Turkey also accepts it and joins. Now our cooperation will be closer, visits and exchange of scientific experience more active. We hope to work on various astronomical topics to develop astronomy, to organize conferences, to carry out all the activities that this cooperation assumes.

4. Other Collaborations

Besides activities for the regional countries, IAU SWCA ROAD also encourages and strengthens collaboration with other regions and countries. Especially promising are contacts with three neighbouring ROADs: East Asian (based in Beijing, China), **Arab World** (based in Amman, Jordan) and **European** (Leiden, Netherlands). The first one is coordinating a huge region (China, Mongolia, North Korea) and is especially interested in the development of Silk Road projects that also relate Armenia. Arab World ROAD is in fact in the same big region (Middle East) and is our closest neighbour (an official agreement was signed between SWCA and Arab World ROADs, as well as between BAO and Sharjah University). The more recently established European ROAD (E- ROAD) in fact involves also Armenia and Turkey, as the astronomical societies of these countries are among EAS Affiliated Societies unified by E-ROAD. We have discussed possibilities for tighter collaboration in all areas (TFs) and establishing new programs. In particular, the EU Erasmus+ program on International Credit Mobility (ICM) was successful in 2023-2025; 12 Armenian researchers and ROAD members visited Leiden University for joint work.

In addition, we have discussed with Indian astronomers the possibilities to collaborate, as India is not a member of any ROAD and the closest one is SWCA. In 2024, Areg Mickaelian and Gayane Baleyan visited ARIES, Nainital, India for delivering seminars and discussion of possible collaboration.

5. Projects, Events and Other Activities

It is a rule that both senior and young scientists from regional countries (especially Georgia and Iran) most often participate in our meetings, schools and other events. We also have many missions to the regional countries, again most often Georgia and Iran.

Armenia is rather active in organizing astronomical meetings, schools and other events. Among the most important meetings and schools held in Armenia, we would like to mention the **7 IAU Symposia and Colloquia**. Another large event was the all-European annual astronomical meeting in 2007, **JENAM-2007** (Joint European and National Astronomical Meeting),held in Yerevan,Armenia. It was the biggest ever scientific event in Armenia. Out of other meetings, one may mention joint meetings with a given country, namely Byurakan-Abastumani (Armenian-Georgian) Colloquia in 1974–2025, Armenian-French Workshops in 1995 and 2009, and the Armenian-Iranian Astronomical Workshop in 2015, as well as many meetings dedicated to the anniversaries of BAO, Viktor Ambartsumian, Anania Shirakatsi, Beniamin Markarian,

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Grigor Gurzadian, Ludvik Mirzoyan, Marat Arakelian and others. Our office has been awarded OAD grants for the organization of **Regional Astronomical Workshops** in 2018 and 2019, and many regional guests were present as well.

Among the summer schools, **Byurakan International Summer Schools (BISS)** are already very famous. We started this initiative in 2006 and, so far, have organized 9 such events: 1BISS in 2006, 2BISS in 2008, 3BISS combined with the IAU International School for Young Scientists (ISYA) in 2010, 4BISS in 2012, 5BISS in 2016, 6BISS in 2018, 7BISS in 2020, 8BISS in 2022, 9BISS in 2024, and 10BISS in 2026 combined with the IAU Hands-on Workshop (I-HOW) in Radio Astronomy. A **Regional Summer School on Space Sciences and Technologies** was organized in 2019 and this was the first step to establish the above-mentioned subjects in Armenia. In addition, it became the beginning of the series of **SWCA Regional Astronomical Summer Schools (RASS)**; 1RASS in 2019, 2RASS in 2021, 3RASS combined with the Inter-Regional Astronomical Summer School (IRASS) in 2023 between SWCA and Arab World ROADs and 4RASS in 2025. IRASS was the first such event among all Regional Offices. **Byurakan Summer Schools for YSU students (BSS)** are our local schools. They have been organized in 1995, 2005, 2009, 2013 and 2023. For the school students, on the initiative of Sona Farmanyan, we organize **BAO Science Camps (BSC)**; 12 such events were held in 2014-2026. **ArAS School Astronomical Lectures** program was started in 2012 on the initiative of Yervant Terzian and Areg Mickaelian. During 2012-2026, we have organized 13 such programs.

Our ROAD representatives are rather active in participating in many international and regional meetings and have given numerous talks at such events related to our activities: scientific, educational, public, and, in general, about our SWCA ROAD.

In the frame of the collaboration between Armenia and Iran, on 15-18 August 2016, Areg Mickaelian (IAU SWCA ROAD Director) and Sona Farmanyan (IAU SWCA ROAD TF3 Programme Coordinator) were invited to the **Research Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics of Maragha (RIAAM)**. During these days, the 8th Advanced Astrophysics Workshop of Maragheh was organized. Areg Mickaelian delivered two lectures on *"Astronomical Surveys, Catalogues, Databases, Archives, and Virtual Observatories"* and *"Multi-Wavelength Studies of Active Galaxies"*. Sona Farmanyan delivered two talks on *"Archaeoastronomy and Cultural Astronomy in South West and Central Asia"* and *"Ancient Mythology and Cosmology "*. Sona also presented the IAU SWCA ROAD activities during 2015-2016. A number of discussions were held with Iranian astronomers, including *Prof.* Hossein Ebadie (RIAAM Director) and *Prof.* Pantea Davoudifar, with whom there was a collaboration in co-supervising two Iranian MSc students.

The fourth **Middle East and African IAU Regional meeting (MEARIM IV)** was jointly hosted by Entoto Observatory & Research Center (EORC) and East African Regional Office of Astronomy for Development (ROAD-IAU) and was conducted from 22-25 May 2017 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia with the theme of *"Exploring our Universe for the benefit of Humankind"*. During the symposium there were activities such as scientific paper presentations, Plenary Guest and Invited speaker sessions, meetings, and discussion on the general progress and Assessments of Astronomy and Astrophysics development in the Middle East and Africa Region. From Armenia, Areg Mickaelian (Director of BAO and SWCA ROAD. and Sona Farmanyan (Public Outreach Coordinator of SWCA ROAD) participated in the meeting and presented 5 talks on various subjects, including one about SWCA ROAD.

The sixth **Middle East and African IAU Regional meeting (MEARIM VI)** took place in 2023 in Cairo, Egypt. From Armenia, Areg Mickaelian (Director of BAO and SWCA ROAD) and Gayane Baleyan (Public Manager of BAO) participated in the meeting and presented 2 talks.

The seventh **Middle East and African IAU Regional meeting (MEARIM VII)** took place in 2025 in Amman, Jordan. From Armenia, Areg Mickaelian (Director of BAO and SWCA ROAD) and Ani Davtyan (BAO Project and Event Manager) participated in the meeting and presented 4 talks.

A number of visits have been conducted to **Georgia, both Tbilisi and Abastumani**. Areg Mickaelian has been invited to deliver lectures in the framework of the European Eastern Partnership (EaP) program in Tbilisi, particularly at EaPEC conferences and in the framework of the European GEANT project. In July 2019, our team visited the Abastumani Astrophysical Observatory (AbAO) and delivered two invited seminars (by Areg Mickaelian and Arus Harutyunyan), while discussions were held on collaboration in the framework of the SWCA ROAD and Astro Tourism project. In 2024, Georgian colleagues hosted the 16th Byurakan-Abastumani Astronomical Colloquium in AbAO with the participation of 13 Armenian scientists.

Visits to Iran were conducted in 2015, 2016, 2018, and 2025. In November 2018, our team visited Tehran (Institute for Fundamental Research, IPM, Iranian National Observatory, INO and Tehran University) and gave two invited seminars (by Areg Mickaelian and Grigor Broutian). Discussions were held on

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future collaboration in both research and education and outreach. In 2025, Areg Mickaelian and Gayane Baleyan visited Shiraz for participation in the Annual Meeting of the Astronomical Society of Iran (with Invited Talks).

The International Conference *"Astronomical Heritage of the Middle East,"* approved by the UNESCO Director General within the UNESCO Participation Program for 2016-2017 was devoted to the role of Astronomy in Culture and other fields of human activities. It was held on 13-17 November 2017 in Armenia. The conference brought together over 70 participants from 20 countries. A discussion of the problems of astronomy-related interdisciplinary sciences and further possible collaborations was organized. The Proceedings of the Meeting will be published by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific Conference Series (ASP CS), which is a world-wide known publication and the papers will appear in all libraries and electronic databases (including ADS). Another such meeting, *"Astronomical Heritage of the Middle East 2"* was approved by UNESCO and was organized on 6-10 October 2025.

We have given many **presentations on our ROAD** and its activities at a number of international meetings: NKAS (Belgrade, Serbia, 2015), IAU GA XXIX (Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, 2015), Arabic ROAD Inauguration Ceremony (Amman, Jordan, 2015), Conferences on the Astronomical Silk Road (Beijing and Urumqi, China, 2015), OAD/ROADs meetings (Cape Town, South Africa, 2016 and 2020), EWASS-2016 (Athens, Greece), 8th Advanced Astrophysics Workshop of Maragheh (Iran, 2016), MEARIM-IV (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 2017), EWASS-2017 (Prague, Czech Rep.), Armenia-Brandenburg Workshop (Nor Amberd, Armenia, 2017), The 12th Arab Conference on Astronomy and Science Space (Amman, Jordan, 2018), EWASS-2018 (Liverpool, UK), IAU GA XXX (Vienna, Austria, 2018), EWASS-2019 (Lyon, France), EWASS-2020 (online), EASS-2021 (online), EWASS-2022 (Valencia, Spain), IAU GA XXXI (Busan, South Korea, 2022), EAS Annual Meetings 2023 (Krakow, Poland) and 2024 (Padova, Italy), IAU GA XXXII (Cape Town, South Africa, 2024), EAS Annual Meetings 2025 (Cork, Ireland) and 2026 (Lausanne, Switzerland), MEARIM-VI (Amman, Jordan, 2025), APRIM (Hong Kong, 2026).

We maintain a tight relationship between the **IAU SWCA ROAD and Eastern Europe**. This includes collaboration with European countries, partial involvement with the IAU European ROAD, ArAS affiliation to the European Astronomical Society (EAS), ArAS collaboration with the Euro-Asian Astronomical Society (EAAS), Armenia's participation in South-East Regional European Astronomical Committee (SREAC), H2020 program (since 2016 Armenia has been an associate member), and collaboration between the Armenian Virtual Observatory (ArVO) and EuroVO, VO-France (also VO-Paris), GAVO, and VObs.it. We also have contacts with other European organizations; Euroscience, SEAC, etc.

We provide here the summary Table 2 of the most important International Events during 2015-2026 with IAU SWCA ROAD active participation (as a rule, presentations on SWCA ROAD activities). Events planned for 2027 are also included.

Table 2: Summary of International Events during 2015–2026 (and forthcoming ones in 2027) with active participation of the IAU SWCA ROAD.

Year	Place	Meetings / Events
2015	La Laguna, Tenerife, Spain	EAS Annual Meeting 2015
2015	Honolulu, Hawaii, USA	IAU General Assembly XXIX
2015	Belgrade, Serbia	National Conference of Astronomers of Serbia (NKAS)
2015	Rome, Italy	SEAC 23rd Annual Conference *Astronomy in Past and Present Cultures*
2015	Amman, Jordan	Arab World ROAD Inauguration Ceremony
2015	Beijing and Urumqi, China	Conferences on *Astronomical Silk Road*
2016	Cape Town, South Africa	OAD/ROADs Face-to-Face meeting
2016	Tenerife, Can. Islands, Spain	Starmus Festival
2016	Athens, Greece	EAS Annual Meeting 2016
2016	Maragheh, Iran	8th Advanced Astrophysics Workshop of Maragheh

Year	Place	Meetings / Events
2017	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	4th Middle East and African Regional IAU Meeting (MEARIM IV)
2017	Trondheim, Norway	Starmus Festival IV: *Life and The Universe*
2017	Prague, Czech Republic	EAS Annual Meeting 2017
2017	S. de Compostela, Spain	SEAC 25th Annual Conference *The Road to the Stars*
2018	Amman, Jordan	12th Arab Conference on *Astronomy and Science Space*
2018	Liverpool, UK	EAS Annual Meeting 2018
2018	Florence, Italy	Conference *Inclusion and intercultural aspects in astro-tourism activities*
2018	Vienna, Austria	IAU General Assembly XXX
2019	Brussels, Belgium	IAU Flagship Event: *International Astronomical Union 1919-2019: 100 Years Under One Sky* (IAU-100)
2019	Lyon, France	EAS Annual Meeting 2019
2020	Cape Town, South Africa	OAD/ROADs Face-to-Face meeting
2020	Online (Leiden, Netherlands)	EAS Annual Meeting 2020
2020	Online (Amman, Jordan)	5th Middle East and African Regional IAU Meeting (MEARIM V)
2021	Online	EAS Annual Meeting 2021
2022	Valencia, Spain	EAS Annual Meeting 2022
2022	Busan, Korea	IAU General Assembly XXXI
2023	Cairo, Egypt	6th Middle East and African Regional IAU Meeting (MEARIM VI)
2023	Krakow, Poland	EAS Annual Meeting 2023
2023	Bandung, Indonesia	Symposium: *From The Universe Back To Earth: Developing Astronomy To Meet Today's Natural Challenges*
2023	Sharjah, UAE	14th Arab Conference on *Astronomy and Spaces Sciences*
2023	Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	IAU Symposium #386: *Dark sky and Astronomical heritage in boosting Astro-tourism around the globe*
2024	Toulouse, France	IAU 11th Conference *Communicating Astronomy with the Public*
2024	Padova, Italy	EAS Annual Meeting 2024
2024	Cape Town, South Africa	IAU General Assembly XXXII
2024	Catania, Sicily, Italy	31st SEAC Annual Meeting 2024: *Skyscapes in the Sun Island*
2025	Shiraz, Iran	Annual Meeting of the Astronomical Society of Iran
2025	Cork, Ireland	EAS Annual Meeting 2025
2025	Amman, Jordan	7th Middle East and African Regional IAU Meeting (MEARIM VII)
2026	Hong Kong, China	Asia Pacific Regional IAU Meeting (APRIM)
2026	Lausanne, Switzerland	EAS Annual Meeting 2026
2026	Mactan, Cebu, Philippines	2nd SEA-PEO Conference

Year	Place	Meetings / Events
2027	Cape Town, S. Africa (coming)	OAD-15 Symposium: *Astronomy for a Better World*
2027	Vienna, Austria (coming)	EAS Annual Meeting 2027
2027	Rome, Italy (coming)	IAU General Assembly XXXIII



Figure 3. Signing agreements with Sharjah University (left) and with Astronomical Society of Iran (right).

We also tightly work with the IAU other offices as well, for Astronomical Education and Public Outreach. We give in Figure 4 the four IAU offices.



Figure 4. IAU Offices of Astronomy for Development (OAD), of Astronomy for Education (OAE), of Astronomy for Outreach (OAO) and for Young Astronomers.

6. Astrotourism Projects

Several projects on Scientific or Astro Tourism have been accomplished, the most important, Astro Tourism in SWCA region. Being the pioneer of Scientific (and Astronomical) tourism, IAU SWCA ROAD has initiated the creation of an Astronomical Tourism webpage for the region. The IAU South West and Central Asian Regional Office of Astronomy for Development implements international astronomical projects focused on the region. Within the framework of the above-mentioned project, an "Astro Tourism" webpage has been created, which aims to introduce places of certain astronomical value that present interest for astronomical tourism. Here you can learn about the history of astronomy and its development not only in Armenia but also in other countries of the region. The webpage also provides information on modern and ancient observatories, sundials, planetariums, space related museums, and many more.



Figure 5. IAU South West and Central Asian ROAD project on Astrotourism in SWCA region.

7. Regional Workshops and Schools

We give here the summary Table 3 of our Regional Astronomical Workshops (RAW) and Regional Astronomical Summer Schools (RASS), as well as joint meetings between two countries during 2013-2026 (the activities started even before the establishment of the Office). Events planned for 2027 are also included.

Table 3: SWCA Regional Astronomical Workshops (RAW), Regional Astronomical Summer Schools (RASS) and other related meetings.

Year	Place	Meetings / Events	Short
2013	Byurakan, Armenia	14th Armenian-Georgian Astronomical Colloquium	14ArmGeo
2015	Byurakan, Armenia	1st Regional Astronomical Workshop	1RAW
2015	Byurakan, Armenia	Armenian-Iranian Astronomical Workshop	AIAW
2017	Yerevan, Armenia	UNESCO Regional Astronomical Conference “Astronomical Heritage of the Middle East”	AHME
2018	Byurakan, Armenia	2nd Regional Astronomical Workshop	2RAW
2019	Byurakan, Armenia	1st Regional Astronomical Summer School	1RASS
2019	Byurakan, Armenia	3rd Regional Astronomical Workshop	3RAW
2021	Byurakan, Armenia	2nd Regional Astronomical Summer School	2RASS
2023	Byurakan, Armenia	15th Armenian-Georgian Astronomical Colloquium	15ArmGeo
2023	Byurakan, Armenia	3rd Regional Astronomical Summer School / 1st Inter-regional Astronomical Summer School	3RASS/1IRASS
2023	Byurakan, Armenia	Armenian-Russian Joint Workshop on Space	
2024	Byurakan, Armenia	4th Regional Astronomical Workshop	4RAW
2024	Abastumani, Georgia	16th Armenian-Georgian Astronomical Colloquium	16ArmGeo

Year	Place	Meetings / Events	Short
2025	Byurakan, Armenia	17th Armenian-Georgian Astronomical Colloquium	17ArmGeo
2025	Byurakan, Armenia	4th Regional Astronomical Summer School	4RASS
2025	Yerevan, Armenia	UNESCO Regional Astronomical Conference "Astronomical Heritage of the Middle East – 2"	AHME-2
2026	Yerevan, Armenia	IAU Conference *Communicating Astronomy with the Public*	CAP-2026
2026	Byurakan, Armenia	IAU Hands-on Workshop in *Radio Astronomy*	I-HOW/10BISS
2026	Byurakan, Armenia	5th Regional Astronomical Workshop	5RAW
2027	Byurakan, Armenia	5th Regional Astronomical Summer School	5RASS
2027	Abastumani, Georgia	18th Armenian-Georgian Astronomical Colloquium	18ArmGeo

8. Summary and Future Plans

The status of the regional astronomical centre supports the regional and international contacts and collaboration both for Armenia and the neighboring countries; this way Armenia, by holding such a centre, strongly contributes to collaborations at all levels: professional, educational and popular. Astronomy in fact plays an important political role in establishing and strengthening friendship and cooperation of the regional nations, which is especially important in our complicated area.

Among our future plans, we envisage to enlarge the number of participating countries (involving more Central Asian and maybe some other ones), work harder for fundraising for implementation of various projects (in all three task forces), organize regional meetings, workshops, conferences on Astronomical Heritage and Astro Tourism, schools and camps.

Among the future plans and activities, we will organize the following:

- Inviting new countries to join (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, etc.)
- Establishing Regional telescopes collaborative network
- Developing Regional Astro Tourism project
- Scientific Writing for Young Astronomers (SWYA) School 2027
- 3rd UNESCO Regional Astronomical Conference *"Astronomical Heritage of the Middle East – 3"*
- Future Regional Astronomical Workshops (RAW): 2027 (6RAW), 2028, 2029, ...
- Future Byurakan International Summer Schools (BISS): 2028 (11BISS), 2030 (12BISS), ...
- Future Regional Astronomical Summer Schools (RASS): 2027 5RASS, 2029 6RASS, etc.
- Future Joint Meetings: Arm-Georgian 2027, Arm-Iranian, etc.
- Byurakan Science Camps (BSC), Space Camps, ArAS/BAO School Lectures

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